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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted in a rural community college and examines two methods for extending community services and the response of the community to the establishment of a Community Resource Center. The basic questions asked in this study are threefold: (1) What strategies can be effectively used by a rural community college in extending its services to its service area? (2) What kind of services can be established? (3) What steps need to be taken to define and implement these services? The research utilized two approaches in community organizing: (1) information-rural development, and (2) problem solving. The informational approach established a number of community groups which serve as sources of information for the purpose of establishing a data bank at the community college. Data have been collected, and the means have been sought for a full-time economic specialist for rural development who will assist in utilizing the collected information. The problem-solving approach centered on organizing a study group on the health needs of senior citizens in one of the major cities. Some restructuring of local services took place along with plans to conduct a county-wide survey. (Author)

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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INFORMATION SYSTEM AT WEST SHORE COMMUNITY COLLEGE: AN INITIAL STEP IN EXTENDING COMMUNITY SERVICES IN RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE SERVICE AREAS

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- A FINAL REPORT -

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Problem

As the most recent off-spring of higher education the community college faces the expectation of making advanced education relevant to the life and needs of local communities. Unlike its parent institution, the university, the community college program is constantly exposed to the examination by a constituency which is generally suspicious of the effectiveness of public institutions and programs. With the addition of declining enrollments and dwindling financial support from federal sources, the community college's survival will be dependent on its ability to successfully identify, plan and implement programs for new student markets. This infers that these institutions will need to seek new and less traditional ways to demonstrate service to their communities.

Through programs of community service the community college is carrying out its search for social relevance. On the one hand, community colleges have localized higher educational opportunities, but on the other, these "new" colleges have become centers of resources which can strengthen the community's ability to shape its own future and deal with an expanding number of social problems.

Even with this challenge, community services has emerged as a "smorgasbord" of educational programs. It is never clear if we are talking about programs especially for adults, evening courses, public relations, news releases, extension centers, concert series or a host of other relatively non-degree oriented programs. In some cases, it is a "filler" so that administratively uncategorized activities can find a home. Other times it becomes an attempt to find new students for funding purposes.

This study had its origin in a rural community college which is seeking new ways to serve and respond to the needs of the local community. Through the funding of the Office of Edu-

cation and by strong support from the leadership of the community college the following feasibility-descriptive study has been conducted. This study attempted to make no assumptions as to outcomes or findings. No program was being imposed. Few parameters were drawn. In essence, the research was to "assess" and "describe" the response of the community to the establishment of a bridge between the community and the college for the general purpose of community resource development.

The rural community was selected as the context for the study. These communities are often the furthest from the resources of higher education. They often possess a declining population along with increasing problems due to a maturing constituency and isolation from labor markets and political decisions. It is in this microcosm of the urban society that we can identify those strategies which can be used by the community college in extending its services to its service area.

The basic questions asked in this study are threefold: 1) What strategies can be effectively used by a rural community college in extending its services to its service area? 2) What kind of services can be established? 3) What steps need to be taken to define and implement these services?

This is a final report of a study conducted at West Shore Community College in Scottville, Michigan. It summarizes an attempt to answer the above questions. Specifically, this report deals with the preliminary steps in establishing a community information service. The creation of a data bank or any other informational service is being used as one approach to the construction of an overall Community Resources Center. These steps have not been tested but should be seen as an experimental attempt to strengthen the capacity of the community college to reach into the community and simultaneously broaden the community's knowledge of its own problem solving capacities.

The report is divided into five parts: 1) a summary of the history, objectives, scope and basic questions used in this study, 2) description of the methods and problems used, 3) summary of the findings, 4) project conclusions and 5) statement of recommendations for use by rural community colleges.

Scope of the Study

The idea for this study originated within the local community. In the spring of 1972 six months before the start of this study, the community college sponsored a Rural Development Conference for the five counties in its service area. At this conference a recommendation was given to the college

by one of the study groups to look into the possibility of developing a depository or data bank of information for use by community organizations. During the summer, funds were secured to conduct a feasibility study which would identify the needs in the community to which a data-bank information center would be directed. A grant was received and a research associate was selected to begin the study in the fall of 1972. The researcher defined his role as an active explorer and designer rather than a passive researcher and data collector.

Instead of conducting a sterile study concluding with recommendations to be implemented after the feasibility study, the researcher started with a program of action-research. This program was designed to encourage a response from the college and community through a process of identifying local needs and establishing a data bank-information service at the college. The role of the researcher was very flexible and allowed for experimenting with different approaches and techniques. Allowing for this flexibility the action researcher was guided by four action-research questions: 1) What kind of information is needed by the community which could be made available by the community college program through an information collecting, storage and retrieval system? 2) What type of organization is needed for gathering community information and for effective use and dissemination? 3) What administrative staff, equipment and program are needed for operating a Community College Information Service? 4) What means can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a community information service?

After a month of meetings with the local college officials supervising the project and meeting with a few local residents who had suggested the original idea at the spring conference, the following steps were outlined as the agenda for the action-researcher and also serves as the framework for the findings summarized in this report.

A. The organizing of community groups and communication channels which function as a base for the development and functioning of a Community Information Service.

   1. The conducting of a reconnaissance survey of the social organization and needs of each county to be served.

   2. The organizing of a community steering committee within each county for the purpose of directing the project.

   3. The establishment of an advisory board, consisting of a broad representation from each county, which will be active in planning and

organizing study committees.

B. The establishment of a Community Information Data Bank at West Shore Community College to function as an integral part of the educational process and mission of the college as well as a resource and service to the community.

1. Survey the literature and contact selected public institutions in order to acquire suggestions, information and models of existing information delivery systems.

2. Plan and construct an information data bank with the cooperation and sponsorship of the college personnel which is fully integrated into the educational program of the community college.

3. Purchase, organize and make operational the equipment needed to support an information data bank.

4. Train the staff who will function as information resource specialists.

C. The formulation and operation of an information gathering system in the community.

1. Collecting and developing forms to be used by community organizations.

2. Maintaining a liaison with community study committees and advisory boards.

3. Developing a procedure for information retrieval, storage and dissemination.

D. The development of the means for monitoring and evaluating the Community Information Service.

1. Encourage the participation of agencies, college staff and local residents in the evaluation of this program.

2. Develop a criteria or standard measuring effectiveness and success.

3. With the assistance of each Advisory Board formulate a series of intended measurable outcomes to be accomplished after six months of program operation.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because of its relevance to the examination of strategies used by community service administrators in community colleges. This particular administrator is vitally concerned with ways to identify community needs and organizing community groups. Many are convinced that the community college, in order to receive support from the community, must do more than advertise its services through brochures and newspapers.

Also the potential for implementing community development techniques by a community college needs exploration. Can the community college effectively help a community strengthen its ability to solve local problems? What role should the community college serve? Can the community college serve as a center for information and the development of data as well as a training base for community development techniques and programs? These and other questions serve to identify the importance of this study.

Limitations

A number of circumstances have limited the execution of this study. The financial means to conduct the study could only support the preparation of some initial organization of the community. There was no previous base in the community on which to build. Most of the community contacts were secured through the college president or referrals from other members in the community who were interviewed initially. Finally the researcher did not live in the area under study; this provided a number of problems in communication and scheduling of community meetings. Commuting expenses increased the project costs and limited research time.

CHAPTER II - METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This section of the report will describe the two main approaches used in linking the college to the community and a summary of action-research methods utilized while carrying out the study. Finally a schedule of events has been included to show the time and management of the study.

Two counties were the main target of this study. In order to assure some anonymity in this report they will be described as County X and County Y. The general approaches used in this study have been identified as: 1) information-rural development approach and 2) problem-solving approach.

Information-Rural Development Approach

This approach is concerned with a general need for community information and the role of the college as a catalyst and center of rural development activity. In order to define the type of information which was needed and to compile data from a variety of sources, a number of distinct steps were followed.

1. Exploratory Stage. Because the researcher was from the outside about six weeks was needed for orientation to the region and to familiarize himself with the nature of the project. Dr. Richard Poston, a community development specialist from Southern Illinois University, was asked to come to provide the initial contact with the community and to propose the general direction for the project. Mr. James King, consultant from Dow, was also involved in the early stage and provided general population data on the region which he had compiled for a number of community colleges in northern Michigan.

Under Dr. Poston's expert direction representatives of the college, the researcher and Mr. King met with representatives of County Y who were brought together by the executive secretary of the local chamber of commerce. The rural development role of the college was outlined and the merits of a local depository of information was discussed.

Additional discussions were held by the researcher with the administration and faculty at West Shore Community College. Some specialists in community development were contacted at Michigan State University in order to help determine the

general objectives of the project. A proposal summarizing the plan of study was drawn up and submitted to the President of West Shore who was also director of the study.

2. Penetration of the Community. In order to develop contacts and support from individuals in the community, forty fact-finding interviews were conducted in counties X and Y. These interview situations served as a good opportunity to read the norms and values of local citizens in addition to determining a "felt" need for the service of an information-data bank. County Y was not generally interested in a data bank at West Shore Community College. County X responded with enthusiasm and encouragement.

3. Permeation into the Life of the Community. The next step was to create an organization in the county which would be a community sponsor for the information service and provide the specific facts about the area which could be compiled in a data bank. This phase was started with a series of interviews with local political, economic and educational leaders. Various group meetings were held. The initial meeting brought together those who were interested in discussing the idea after the initial interviews. They met, supported the idea and selected 15 county members who were asked by members of this group to serve on a County X Information Committee.

The Information Committee was organized with about twelve individuals. Each represented a particular area of economic information derived from a list compiled by the committee.

A third group was formed which became a policy making body for the project. Members of the county board of commissioners, representatives of the Information Committee and college staff all met to give official support to the project and to find ways of securing additional funds at the conclusion of the feasibility study.

3. Collection of Data. Each member of the Information Committee served as a sub-group chairman for one particular area of data collection. Because of the terminal role of the researcher, many were reluctant to spend time on this phase because of fear that it would be dropped at the end of the feasibility study. About one-half of the intended data had been collected at the end of the study. Additional data was secured from state and federal sources. For example, the 4th count of the 1970 census has been entered into the data bank for counties X and Y.

4. Utilization of the Data. Very little has been done to encourage the use of the information collected. It is hoped that the faculty and community organizations will request information during the year. An additional attempt was made to secure funds from the Upper Great Lakes Economic District for the purpose of securing a specialist to work with existing

community and project groups for the purpose of utilizing the data. A proposal for a full time economic specialist was drawn up by members of the policy board and submitted to the Upper Great Lakes Economic Development District. At the present time the proposal has been rejected due to the termination of funding for the Upper Great Lakes District itself. Other funding sources will be sought by the college.

Problem-Solving Approach

1. Exploratory Stage. In County Y attempts were initially made to use an information-rural development approach. Through local interviews a lack of interest was shown for the data bank idea. Some local citizens felt that they had grown to their limit economically. Others were reluctant to make their data public and available to the larger region. Interest was found on an issue regarding the health needs of senior citizens. A series of interviews were conducted to assess the community's attitude toward this problem.

2. Organization of an Action Group. Representatives from various health related organizations met to form a study group on the needs of senior citizens. After rejecting the need for compiling health service data the group sought to expand its membership to include physicians, health administrators, housing and senior citizen representatives.

3. Action Planning. The group met on three occasions and formulated plans for a general health fact-finding survey to be conducted throughout the county. The results would be assessed by the committee and would determine the extent of health needs and changes which should be made in health services.

4. Action Program. At the conclusion of this study the program and leadership of this group was turned over to the Community Services Officer at West Shore Community College (as recommended by the study group) and individual assignments were made to the committee members for conducting the survey. The survey itself and its execution extends beyond the scope of this report. It should be noted that while this group was meeting, a great deal of communication took place among groups which had been heretofore, alienated and out of contact with one another. During the initial period of discussion a new senior citizen clinic was organized in the community and some major changes took place in the administration of health services.

Action-Research Techniques Utilized

1. Interviewing. A great deal of the design and planning

of this project was developed as the result of one-on-one interviews with individuals in the community. Initially, the contacts served as a reconnaissance survey of community opinions and ideas. Secondly, the interview method helped to gain community acceptance of the new services to be provided by the college and aided in its organization. Finally, the contacts have generally helped to establish a better image of the college throughout the two-county area.

2. Group Work. The organizing of community groups into committees proved to be very helpful in planning the implementation of plans and in receiving general community support. It was difficult, even in a rural area, to find a suitable time when 9-12 people could come together for a meeting. The meetings displayed cooperation and no noticeable opposition emerged hindering the group process.

3. Administrative-Informational. Some administrative tasks were carried out at the college. Generally, these centered around the compiling of information in the data bank. An excellent staff assistant was available. She was helpful in organizing the data and in maintaining contact, through phone and letter, with local residents.

4. Project Continuation and New Funding. An attempt was made to secure financial support from within and outside the service area. The Policy Committee met to consider plans for funding a local economic development specialist who would be asked to use the data bank in helping the area with economic development projects. A series of meetings were held with the Upper Great Lake Economic District for the purpose of designing a funding proposal.

Schedule of Events

The following stages were followed in conducting the study. A time schedule has been added which provides an overview of the management of the seven month study.

Stage I - Exploratory Stage

a. Meeting with consultant
b. Initial meetings with residents
c. Interviews with community college staff

Stage II - Organizing the Community

a. Securing sponsorship from steering committee
b. Organizing study committees
c. Establishing a Community Information Committee with community college staff

Stage III - Collection of Data

a. Development of data instruments
b. Data collecting by community groups
c. Assessment of data by college staff

Stage IV - Development of College Data Bank

a. Establish temporary inventory
b. Train college staff
c. Interpretation of collected data

Stage V - Operation of Data Bank and Information Exchange

a. Publicizing information service
b. Receiving requests

Stage VI - Updating of Data Bank and Evaluation of Project

a. Develop updating procedure
b. Writing evaluation report

Stage VII - Continuation

a. Explore funding sources
b. Commitment for re-funding and proposal writing

TIME SCHEDULE*	COUNTY X	COUNTY Y	WEST SHORE C.C.
JULY	I.a. 7/1 - 7/12	I. 7/1-7/26	
	I.b. 7/31- 9/15		
AUGUST	II.a. 8/9 - 9/20	II. 8/1-1/28/73	
	II.b. 8/12- 9/20		
SEPTEMBER	III.a. 9/15-11/20		
	III.b. 9/15-11/20		
OCTOBER			
NOVEMBER	V.a. 11/15-12/31		VII.a. 11/1 -12/15
	V.b. 11/30-12/15		VII.b. 11/10-12/31
			VI.c. 11/15-12/31
DECEMBER	IV.c. 12/5 -12/31		VII.a. 12/5 - 1/29
	VII.a. 12/30- 1/29		
JANUARY	VI.b. 1/3 - 1/29		

*Numerals refer to the Schedule of Events on the preceding page.

CHAPTER III - SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The basic data and findings of this study can be condensed under four major topics: 1) values and attitudes in the West Shore Community College Service Area, 2) informational needs and resources, 3) organizational needs and 4) program and staff needs. The findings are not an attempt to statistically report but serve as a description of a number of general impressions made by the researcher.

Values and Attitudes in the West Shore Service Area

After a series of interviews and meetings with individuals in the West Shore Community College Service Area, a number of values and attitudes toward higher education, the community and planning have been identified.

Higher education has become a new reality in the service area since the start of the college in 1967. Without question those interviewed were proud of their own local institution of higher learning and look to the college as a center for intellectual and cultural activity. One of the college's greatest assets is its present state of neutrality in social and political affairs. Those problems attributed to the college stem not from the lack of services but from the impression that these services do not extend deep enough into the community. Suspicion and criticism of college services can be identified more with county ties than with any other distinguishing characteristic.

A high degree of support for the college can be found from within most area of the community. There was only minor resistance to the college engaging in community development activities which extend beyond the college's traditional role.

In addition to the need for better access to services, the public was not familiar with the role of a comprehensive community college. Many were surprised that the college would use its resources for community improvement and problem-solving programs.

On the county level acceptance for planning and development was very strong. This was especially true in County X. Due to an expected extension of an interstate highway into the area many public officials were eager to work out problems

of apathy and to find ways of developing present resources and promote new business and industry.

The research was intentionally directed toward those who were interested in development and planning. There was reported to be a group in the community which did not enthusiastically support these endeavors. They were not vocal nor did they serve to block the progress of the project.

The practice of planning has not been a systematic activity in the county. It has suffered from a lack of expertise and local initiative. The county officials were found to be supportive but did not have sufficient time to devote to long range planning. Different development efforts were being conducted throughout the county with little coordination. In general, there was a strong interest in planning and the college was seen as a potential catalyst for bringing various planning groups and activities together.

Informational Needs and Resources

A major focus of this study is the development of information on the area which would be meaningful to local citizens. It should be pointed out that a great deal of data was present in various offices within the local communities. Through a series of group meetings and discussions a basic economic outline was selected for use by the information committee:

I. Location & History
   - a. Purpose
   - b. Prospectus

II. Population & Labor Force
   - a. Population
   - b. Labor Force
   - c. Unemployment
   - d. Labor Unions

III. Transportation
   - a. Highways
   - b. Railroads
   - c. Trucking Service
   - d. Bus Lines
   - e. Air Service
   - f. River Transportation

IV. Utilities
   - a. Electric Power
   - b. Natural Gas
   - c. Telephone Service
   - d. Water
   - e. Sewage Disposal

V. Natural Resources
   - a. Climate
   - b. Topography
   - c. Timber
   - d. Coal and Oil
   - e. Minerals linked with chemical, metallurgical and processing use

VI. Agriculture
   - a. Agriculture statistics
   - b. Soils
   - c. Land Use
   - d. Types and Sizes of Farms
   - e. Farm Labor
   - f. Types of Farm Operators

VII. Plant Sites & Plant Facilities

a. Available Buildings
b. Available Sites

VIII. Capital Resources

a. Banks
b. Savings and Loans
c. Others

IX. Construction & Housing

a. Contractors
b. Construction Trades and Wages
c. Others

X. Present Industry

a. Existing Establishments
b. Wages
c. Housing

XI. Government & Taxes

a. Government and Services
b. Tax Rates and Assessments

XII. Retail Trade & Services

a. Newspapers
b. Radio
c. Television
d. Retail Business
e. Professional Services
f. Industrial Supplies and Services

XIII. Education

a. School Systems
b. Training Programs
c. Graduate Immigratory Patterns
d. Higher Education

XIV. Community Facilities

a. Churches
b. Community Organizations
c. Public Library
d. Post Office
e. Health Facilities
f. Parks and Recreation

XV. Tourism

This outline of economic categories served as the basic organization of the data bank. It should be noted that even though the outline is heavily ladened with economic categories the committee insisted that it include social, economic and political information.

Throughout the study the various interviews and community meetings many needs, both economic and otherwise, were discussed. The research has attempted to select those concerns which were mentioned more often and which would serve as priority "felt needs" by those in County X. The following list represents a sampling of those areas of community concern for which a data bank would have relevance. These have been compiled from interviews and minutes of community meetings:

1. Contact local residents to discuss the development of economic resources (land development, expansion of utilities, promote investment).

2. Define the strengths of the area for potential marketability.

3. Promote and sell the area to prospective industrial

and funding interests.

4. Develop a specific economic plan for the county.

5. Work with community groups in identifying economic needs and resources.

6. Develop a profile of specific funding sources along with developing personal contacts with directors of state and federal agencies.

7. Assist organizations in evaluating economic expansion projects and activities.

8. Expedite the development of an industrial corporation.

9. Explore the potential of the use of the west shoreline as a shipping port for handling natural gas and oil at ports. Examine the possibility of Ludington as a package freight center.

10. Assist in improving communications from local programs to federal and state levels.

11. Assess the potential expansion of chemical and natural resources.

12. Assist community development organizations in identifying and solving specific program and action problems.

13. Assist in forecasting economic development.

14. Provide help in improving existing industrial and commercial establishments.

15. Supervise an annual updating of the Information-Data Bank.

16. Assist in bringing together units of government for participation in economic expansion.

17. Organize a county industrial promotion team composed of local businessmen.

18. Develop and publish a brochure for use in promoting industrial relocation.

Local and state data was also collected and was found to be especially helpful from the Departments of Labor, Commerce and Social Service. There was consistently no reluctance on the part of the majority of citizens participating in this study that 1) a depository of data was needed and should be

developed, 2) that growth of the community must be planned and guided out of an analysis of this data and 3) the presence of such a depository would help qualify the area for inclusion into state planning districts as well as an asset in attracting new industry and commercial enterprises. The major need still present in the area is a need for expertise in utilizing the information.

Organizational Needs

There was a general impression throughout the study that the community college would be an ideal place for the development of an informational data bank and center for stimulating economic and community development. Its neutral position along with faculty and student resources were often cited as important.

One very important observation of the researcher was the importance of key members within the rural community. Listed below is a brief discussion of various groups and individuals that were important in the development of the project.

1. Cooperative Extension Agent. The agents from the land-grant institution, Michigan State University, were a vital and supportive element in the establishment of a data bank. These agents "know" the community. Even though they may directly serve a select portion of the county their experience and participation has lead them to a competent analysis of the power structure, local needs and social attitudes. These agents were found to be an excellent "entry" into the community and their referral was well received.

2. City Managers. The city managers were also very important for legitimation and support. Nothing would have transpired without their acceptance. They were a key in the data collecting and community organizing areas.

3. Influential Commercial and Commercial Leaders. From the officers of the Chamber of Commerce to the local bankers, the breadth of support was received and welcomed. There was no real center for dialogue among these individuals in the community. The development of projects such as the data bank was well accepted.

4. Political Leaders. Political and economic support will be needed for the long range development of a community data bank and resource center. With revenue sharing on the federal level, more funds should be available for this purpose.

5. College Leaders. The administrative staff of the college was very supportive of strengthening community development activities. It was obvious that the financial pressures are a major block to the expansion of this function at the college.

Unfortunately, faculty and other staff were not adequately involved in this study. The potential for their support has not been examined.

Program and Staff Needs

In order to establish a community information and resource center, money and staff must be secured. The college administrative staff and faculty do not have time for general developmental or exploratory projects. A full-time economic development specialist could work with the faculty in community information and resource development.

The Community Services Office at the college would be a logical home for such a specialist. There would be a need to keep it separate from the continuing education and community action component of the community service operations, at least in the programming area.

Two additional staff members are needed immediately. A Community Information Specialist could handle the compiling and use of the information itself. A Rural Development Specialist could be in charge of community organizing and the application of data in the solving of specific problems defined by the community. The Community Services Officer could support the program with the sponsorship of workshops and conferences. Finally, faculty and students could be engaged through release time and course assignments to participate with community action-research groups.

CHAPTER IV - CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions emerge out of this study and serve as the basis for the recommendations found in Chapter V.

1. The community college can serve as a center for community information and resource development. The community looks favorably to the college as "neutral ground" and having the "catalytic" expertise to organize, train and research topics which will bring economic improvement.

2. A data bank of community information can be created with the assistance of community groups. Two-thirds of the information needed for this depository is found within the county. The remainder can be received from state and federal offices in the form of yearly reports.

3. At least six months must be spent in community contact (interviews), organizing (group work) and promoting (securing support) in order to communicate an awareness of the program and find credibility and gain acceptance.

4. An action base of local leaders must be developed and nurtured. Without them a resource center would be useless. Working as a planning council they take on the form of a "task force" with the responsibility to plan and develop the new services.

5. A rural-development strategy took root from the start. It met the interest and needs of a broad group of people and was easy to articulate to local residents. The problem-solving strategy was much more difficult to implement. It depended on a few local residents who saw this service as meeting their special interests. This activity provided an opportunity to heal conflict, reallocate resources and develop a dialogue concerning a specific problem.

6. A project of this sort, even though it failed to establish a permanent center at the college, did enhance the good will and relations of the college with the community. A number of citizens had never talked with a representative from the college before. Others had never visited the college until their participation in group meetings for the project. A number became more aware of the nature of a comprehensive community college. Even if the Community Information and Resource Center is not implemented as recommended by this study, the

findings do indicate that there is a need for a stronger base for community service programming at the college in the year ahead.

7. New funding sources for rural development must be found. The project has raised community expectations and with the dissolution of the Upper Great Lakes Economic District, other contacts will need to be made at the state level.

8. The concept of "joint sponsorship" is important in describing the ways that the community can participate with resource specialists. This involves the sponsorship of programs by a community college or organization which in turn brings in outside professionals for ideas and technical assistance.

CHAPTER V - IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been developed by the action-researcher for consideration and possible incorporation into the college program. It is intended that these ideas may be applicable to other rural community colleges which may be interested in developing a stronger link between the college and the community.

Community Resources Center Proposed

In order to carry out an information and development service a vehicle must be identified and organized by the college. The unit most suited for this would be a Community Resources Center which is assigned the role of developing and linking resources within the community college service area with groups, individuals and organizations.

The Center could carry out the following functions:

Informational

1. Publish a directory of social services for use by individuals and social organizations.
2. Compile and up-date a Regional Data Bank.
3. Publish periodic data sheets on the community and its trends.
4. Handle requests for information from county groups.

Training and Communication

1. Hold annual regional economic development conferences.
2. Sponsor workshops on community development issues: planning, land use, recreation and economic development.
3. Establish an extension center in nearby communities.
4. Provide off-campus learning centers where

student interns can perform useful knowledge development roles as an inherent part of their education.[1]

Needs Identification and Resolution of Problems

1. Establish task forces to study and research items of specific concern to the community (e.g. pollution, health, education).

2. Provide a location where university and community college faculty and students from many disciplines can work together in community laboratory education -- where faculty and students learn while performing useful knowledge development roles in the real world of the rural society.[2]

3. Conduct a community Self-Study.

Full-Time Professional Staff

In order to carry out the services of information and planning, it is recommended that the position of Director of Community Information and Development Services be created. His duties would be fourfold:

1. Organize and coordinate various fact-finding committees in the county and other information sources for the purpose of gathering data for community and economic development activities.

   a. Monitor the work of information sources in and out of the county in order to gather base line data which is needed in planning and development projects.

   b. Meet with each information source and examine the retrieval system as well as up-dating existing data every six months.

   c. Prepare detailed reporting instruments for use by fact finding committees in securing data.

   d. Examine with the Industrial Development Corporation and other groups the feasibility of conducting county-wide information surveys in areas of community need.

2. Compile and index all data which is received from committees and other sources.

a. Supervise the type of data and equipment needed for the storage and reproduction of the data housed in the Data-Bank.

b. Develop and utilize indexing methods for easy access to data through an information and source card file.

c. Publish an outline of resources and services available from the information system.

3. Encourage the maximal use of the Data-Bank and stimulate analysis and research.

a. Establish an approach for involving county and college personnel in a trend analysis of the compiled data.

b. Organize a West Shore Community College Information Research Team composed of students and faculty.

c. Initiate and support county groups in the use of the Data-Bank for the purpose of problem-solving.

4. Disseminate information on request to community organizations for the purpose of community development.

a. Publish a County Economic Development Profile.

b. Provide the county with base line data which is needed for planning certification.

c. Provide an informal source for immediate data needs for various interests in the county.

Semi-Annual Community Development Conference

Focus on the college and other agencies' role in community development can be provided by holding two community development conferences a year at the college. The first should be held early in the year and deal with general development principles and problem identification. Out of this conference could emerge study groups which could meet throughout the year. The final conference would look at the past year

and the work of the study groups. This would serve as a means of communication and evaluation of present programs. Planning for the fall conference could be handled in the summer.

Examination of a Community Development Curriculum

In order to put the services of a community resources program into a training program some attempt must be made to establish a series of courses into a community development curriculum. As many non-traditional instructional modes as possible should be used in this program. Workshops and conferences held for one day or on a weekend would be very effective. A Certificate in Community Studies could be offered. The following list of titles serves to identify a number of specialty courses or seminars which would be relevant to the findings of this study.

Land Use

Environmental Quality

Recreational Land Ownership

Local Government (Management and Procedures)

Taxation (Real Estate and Other Taxes)

Housing (Civil Rights, Land Use, Senior Citizens, Quality of Housing)

Mobile Home Living

Liabilities and Insurance

Private Recreation Development

Youth Programs

Building Construction Codes

New Job Training and Employment Needs

Community Planning

Improving Your Community

Studying Your Community

Information Systems

Problems in the Rural Community

Financial Support

With the termination of the Upper Great Lakes Economic District a major need exists to find outside funding for an information and development service. It is recommended here that a research committee be established at the college to look into the provisions of the Rural Development Act of 1972. Some ties can be established with Michigan State University Experiment Station and other extension programs.

After one year of demonstration of the value of this program by outside funds an attempt should be made for local funding. Special revenue sharing monies and other financial resources within the county and service area could work together to co-sponsor an economic development specialist.

A Concluding Note

The emergence of a comprehensive community resource center within the rural community college is a reflection of the needs of citizens in coping with problems of living in an increasingly complex society and in participating in community organizational planning at the local level. It has been found in this study that citizens already have a great deal of information on their community and region and yet there have been few attempts to comprehensively participate in analyzing, evaluating and utilizing local data. The development of a Community Resource Center is an attempt to provide the linkage.

The findings of this study support the role of the community college as a facilitator of community development. Even though major focus was on organizing citizens and the identification of community needs, the facts point with promise to the ability of rural committees to work together in managing the growth and change affecting their lives. The major need is in generating public funds which will support endeavors that bring about community wide programs and projects which encourage wide participation of local citizens.

The trend in calling on higher education to provide a technological, research, training and organizational function for the local areas is an exciting one. One major caution is that duplication and competition of these functions is not a luxury rural areas can afford. The community college must try to stimulate local consent and initiative from the community. It must try to weather political issues and establish greater options for community growth rather than making judgements as to any particular direction for development. The success of any program of this kind will depend on the emergence, within the daily events of a community, of a more deliberate, rational and systematic approach to the solution

of community problems. It is this mission, which is knocking on the swinging door, the community college is challenged to accept and fulfill.

NOTES

1-2 Sower, Christopher. The Urban Experiment Station-Off Campus Learning Centers (mimeograph). Michigan State University

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